

## Addendum to the 2016–17 basin annual environmental watering priorities

For the 2016–17 basin annual environmental watering priorities, the MDBA planned in anticipation of dry conditions but also prepared for moderate conditions should water availability improve.

Several central and many southern catchments in the basin are now experiencing wet conditions. In the Lachlan and Macquarie catchments, for instance, the volume of environmental water has increased dramatically since June. In other catchments, such as the Murray, there have been significant unregulated flows. Conditions have now moved to wet in these catchments, and based on the Bureau's rainfall forecast information, these wet conditions may persist through until at least December.

A number of priorities were identified by the Authority to take advantage of these wetter conditions and a more moderate water resource availability prevailing. These are listed below and represent the most pressing use of environmental water. For three of these priorities, some additional guidance is provided. A priority on floodplain vegetation has been added.

**Prevent further critical deterioration of Moira grass in the Barmah–Millewa Forest, subject to resolving natural resource management issues.**

**Maintain inundation of floodplain areas for sufficient duration to: freshen groundwater; reduce soil salinity; improve health of mature trees; and promote recruitment of**

**long-lived floodplain vegetation, including seed set and germination.**

**Capitalise on opportunities to support waterbird breeding. Sites in the Lachlan, Macquarie and Murray catchments now show potential for successful waterbird breeding in the coming months. At these sites, environmental water should be used to sustain the duration and depth of inundation so that the waterbirds can reproduce successfully.**

**Contribute to the long-term recovery of threatened fish species, including silver perch, through range expansion and establishment of new populations. Environmental water can benefit silver perch recruitment by dampening sharp and extended drops in River Murray levels downstream of Yarrawonga during late spring and summer. Provision of water for small in-channel rises in Victorian tributaries and the Murray in summer and autumn will support dispersal of young silver perch.**

**Protect aquatic habitat conditions in the Coorong and support native fish movement by optimising flows into the Coorong and through the Murray Mouth. In particular, promote *Ruppia* recruitment by elevating water levels in the Coorong from October to December by building on the unregulated flows with environmental water.**

These are additional rather than alternatives to those identified for dry conditions.